DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 398 181 SP 036 787

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TITLE The Effect of Year Round School on Teacher Attendance.
PUB DATE Apr 96
NOTE 10p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Educational Environment; Elementary Education; *Employee Absenteeism; *School Schedules; *Teacher Attendance; Teacher Behavior; *Teacher Motivation; *Teaching Conditions; *Year Round Schools
IDENTIFIERS Chicago Public Schools IL

ABSTRACT

Participants in this study of the effect of year round schools on teacher attendance included 45 elementary school teachers from a Chicago (Illinois) public school located in a predominately low socioeconomic neighborhood comprised of 98 percent Hispanic students. These teachers were part of the staff when the school was on a traditional calendar and remained on the staff when the calendar changed to year round. Payroll records were used to determine the number of days teachers were absent. Findings of the study supported earlier research that there was no significant change in teacher attendance after the change to a year round schedule. The results suggest that while many educators use improved teacher attendance as one benefit of the year round calendar, they are unaware that many research findings indicate the overall insignificance of the change in teacher attendance after the year round calendar has been implemented. Further refinement of the study by stratified sampling may indicate different results for extraneous variables such as age, gender, years of teaching, grade level or subject taught. (Contains 15 references.) (ND)

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THE EFFECT OF YEAR ROUND SCHOOL ON TEACHER ATTENDANCE

Janice A. Kocek

While the issue of absenteeism has received considerable attention in industry, there have been very few conceptual or theoretical studies in the field of education pertaining to teachers.

Building on the research of Ehrenberg and Zafrian, Jacobsen (1993) found positive relationships between teacher and student absenteeism. This has significant meaning in that in states where daily student attendance is a determinant in how much money support a district receives, teacher absenteeism may indirectly and negatively affect state aid. Ehrenburg also found that students' test score performances were correlated with teacher absences. Results showed that for every three additional days students were absent, the percent of those who passed a test fails by about 1.0 to 2.5 percentage points.

However, little information seems to exist with respect to the effect of the year round school calendar as compared to the traditional school calendar on teacher attendance.

Research in education is meaningful to the extent that it improves the practice of education. The practical concerns that guide this research in teacher absenteeism and the year round school are significant in contributing to the adoption of year round school by school districts as a viable solution to various aspects of education, including financial cost, student absences, and student achievement.

History of Year Round School

The history of the public school calendars in the United States show that they were designed to fit the needs of the community. In the 1800's when eighty-five percent of the population was agrarian, children in rural areas were needed from spring through fall to help their families with some form of agricultural work. The majority of schools in those areas were open only five or six months. At the same time, most urban schools scheduled eleven or twelve month schools to accommodate the large influx of immigrant children. The traditional nine month calendar evolved by 1900, and was adopted on a widespread basis as rural schools were pressured to lengthen their school year and urban schools agreed to shorten theirs (Rodgers, 1993).

Records from the early 1900's show year round schools in a variety of communities throughout the country, although interest did not expand on a large basis until approximately twenty-five years ago; with the momentum starting in California and spreading eastward (Brekke, 1990). Currently there are over 2300 year round schools

in the United States. Seventeen of them are in Illinois, with fourteen of them established in the Chicago Public Schools within the past six years (Ballinger, 1996).

Teacher Attendance

Teacher attendance is defined as " being present " at work. Absence may occur for one of several reasons: a teacher is ill and unable to work; a teacher is unavailable to work due to a commitment that cannot be scheduled for any other time than school hours, such as a doctor or dental appointment; or a teacher prefers to be somewhere else, such as an additional paid "vacation" day when no health problem exists.

In their study, Ehrenberg (1991) found in a school district outside of New York City that the average sick days used in the 1986-1987 academic year of a traditional school was 8.9 days, resulting in additional personnel expenditures of $ 267,000.

Madden's (1991) review of a national survey, found that combined costs of absent teachers and substitute teachers came to two billion dollars yearly. The literature reviewed was limited to reasons for teacher absenteeism, financial cost, and suggestions for reducing absences.

A study by Lee (1991) on the effectiveness of secondary agricultural teachers in the United States, showed that teachers in the study averaged less than four days absent per year. Also at the secondary level, Scott (1990) examined characteristics and attitudes of secondary school teachers to determine if gender played a role in absenteeism rate. Although women were found to perceive some work related factors different than men, and to take more days off than men; their absence occurrences were not significantly different. The teachers' age and attitude toward pay were the only factors found to exhibit gender-related impact on absenteeism. For both men and women, job involvement and perceived role conflict were found to be significantly related to absenteeism.

Jacobsen collected teacher attendance data for 1989-1990 through 1991-1992 from four schools in a western New York School district. Eleven individual / organizational variables (age, gender marital status, level of education, years of teaching experience, tenure status, teaching assignment, sick leave accumulated and conference days taken) were reviewed on the frequency of short term absences. No significant relationships were found between these variables.

Teacher Attendance and Year Round Schools

A study was conducted of three year round schools in Provo, Utah of the anticipated effect of year round education on teacher absenteeism (VanMondfrans, 1985). The teachers in two of the schools believed there would be no significant increase in absenteeism, while 8 percent in the third school felt there would be significant increase. Results regarding opinions of decrease in teacher absenteeism showed 56 percent, 39 percent and 31 percent respectively. Percentages of 4, 13, and 15 from

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each school felt there would not be a significant change either way. No actual records for the year were examined. However, it was included in the study that the average typical anticipated cost for substitute teachers in a traditional school was $5424 per year and the average typical anticipated cost for substitute teachers in a year round school was $2945. These figures imply that there would be a significant decrease in teacher absenteeism. The study concluded by recommending that an evaluation be made by securing teacher attendance records the following years.

In addition, White (1987) reported there appeared to be some connection between teacher absenteeism and the variation in attendance patterns in year round schools compared to the traditional schools. When cost savings per pupil were computed, he observed that teachers employed in year round schools used less sick days. Results found from an opinion poll of veteran principals who had managed both traditional and year round schools showed that they believed teacher absenteeism rate would not be adversely affected by the year round calendar.

Similarly, administrators of Oxnard School District, Florida (1990), studied teacher attendance in their year round schools. They stated that the year round schools in their district had better teacher attendance, especially at the elementary level. Teachers in these schools were absent on an average of 5.5 days per year, while teachers in school following the traditional calendar were absent an average of 6.4 days per year.

Peltier's (1991) review of earlier studies by Quinlan, George, Emmett, and White found that teacher absenteeism at both the elementary and high school levels in year round schools had decreased; their reason being that improved attendance was associated with the more frequent vacation periods. Mazzarella and Loyd, as cited in Opheim (1995), also maintained from their earlier research studies on year round schools that due to shorter, more frequent breaks, less burnout and tension occurred; and teacher absenteeism was reduced. A study by Hoke, also cited by Opheim, reported that in Santa Anna, California, the use of sick leave by teachers declined 25 percent with a change in the school calendar.

Fardig (1992) calculated attendance rates for teachers in three schools for 1989-1990 prior to the implementation of year round education; and then for 1990-1991 and 1991-1992 after two years of the year round calendar. Based on the attendance records of the three schools, there were no indications that teacher attendance changed significantly after the year round calendar was implemented. However, it was surmised through teacher interviews that there was less teacher fatigue since the implementation of the year round calendar.

Although literature on the effect of year round schools and teacher attendance appears to be minimal, available literature that was reviewed indicates that the year round calendar has some correlation to teacher absences. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to determine the effect of year round school on teacher attendance.

Procedures

Population / Sample:

The population of this study included forty-five elementary school teachers from a Chicago Public School located in a predominately low socioeconomic neighborhood comprised of 98 percent Hispanic students. The student mobility rate is 31.5% and the rate of student attendance is 94.4% as reported on the 1995 State School Report Card. These teachers were a part of the staff when the school was on a traditional calendar and remained on the staff when the calendar changed to year round. From these forty-five teachers,using the table of random numbers, forty teachers were selected from the population.

For purposes of this study, teacher payroll records were used to determine the number of days teachers were absent. Payroll records from a ten month school year represent a sample from a traditional school year. Payroll records of the same sample from the following ten month period reflect the year round calendar. The single group pretest - post test design was used.

The instrument used was the Chicago Board of Education payroll records from designated elementary school. Records were used from a ten month period from the traditional calendar. Records were then used from a ten month period after the same school had changed to a year round calendar.

Findings

The samples for the study included teachers at a Chicago public school which changed from the traditional school calendar to a year round calendar. Forty teachers were randomly selected from a group of forty-five teachers. Data was taken from the school payroll attendance records. School payroll attendance records of the forty teachers were recorded from one traditional school calendar (pretest), and one year round calendar (post-test). The findings were tabulated in terms of means and standard deviations. The mean scores, which represented a nominal scale, was tested for significant appropriateness through the use of the Chi - Square Test ($p<.05$). Table I summarizes the statistical analyses.

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TABLE 1
ONE DIMENSIONAL CHI - SQUARE

OBSERVED FREQUENCY	EXPECTED FREQUENCY	CELL CHI - SQUARE
8.65	7.68	.121
6.72	7.68	.121
CHI - SQUARE		.242
TOTAL NO. OF OBSERVATIONS		15.36
NO. OF CATEGORIES (N)		2
DEGREES OF FREEDOM (N - 1)		1

	T	YR
O=	8.65	6.72
E=	7.68	7.68

X2 = .242 < 3.841
*INSIGNIFICANT LEVEL OF CONFIDENCE

The purpose of this study was to assess the effect of year round school on teacher attendance. The results of the findings indicate an in significance at .05 level of confidence. The data from this study leads to the acceptance of the null hypothesis: teachers who work in a year round school will not have a significantly higher attendance rate than those who work in a traditional school. These findings tend to agree with the results of the Oxnard School District (1990) which showed a decrease in teacher attendance in the year round school of less than one day. Similarly, the findings of Fardig (1990) and White (1987) indicated that there was no significant change in teacher attendance after the year round calendar was implemented.

The results of this study suggest that while many educators who are advocates of year round education use improved teacher attendance as one benefit of the calendar; they are unaware that many research findings indicate the overall insignificance of the change of teacher attendance rate as compared to the traditional calendar.

This study implicates the need to continue research in this area through larger population samples and longer spans of time. Further refinement of the study by

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stratified sampling may indicate different results for extraneous variables such as age, gender, years of teaching, grade level or subject taught.

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